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(Guest Editor — EARLE BIRNEY)

OUTPOSTS

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CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN POETRY

EARLE BIRNEY

LET me begin by expressing my gratitude to your editor, Mr. Howard Sergeant, both for the stimulating poems which he has collected for the British number of the CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE, and for the opportunity which he has given me to edit this Canadian number of OUTPOSTS. May this be the forerunner of many cultural exchanges within the English-speaking world.

In the remarks that follow I have had to keep your paper shortage in mind. In return, I hope British readers will realise that so brief an account of any country's poetry cannot be more than tentative foot-notes to the poems. It is the latter which will make or mar this issue, and it is to them that I have given the space.

Before 1930, most Canadian verse was about nature—we have a great deal of nature. The sentiments were generally Wordsworthian, the rhythm of those of Longfellow (later Rupert Brooke and Kipling). The best in this vein—Carman, Lampman, D. C. Scott, Service, Roberts—achieved some international circulation, and are now embalmed in the school readers. About fifteen years ago the spirit of Eliot and the ghost of Donne got loose in our land, manifesting themselves particularly in the work of a 'Montreal Group' of students and teachers at McGill University (F. R. Scott, A. J. M. Smith, Leo Kennedy, Klein, Gustafson). That three of these five quickly removed to the United States suggests one of the difficulties attendant upon the creation of a stable Canadian culture. Before the group broke up, however, it was able, with the co-operation of E. J. Pratt and Dorothy Livesay in Ontario, to overcome much of the colonial time-lag in Canadian poetry, increasing its experimental and intellectual content and bringing it into the circle of international experience.

In Canada, as in England, the new metaphysical trend had scarcely begun before it was sharply modified by the influence of Marxist thought. The fusion is best seen in the earlier work of Smith (now more active as critic and anthologist), F. R. Scott (now national secretary of the C.C.F., Canada's socialist party), and Dorothy Livesay. It was less evident in Gustafson, who evolved an independent style from the disparate traditions of Anglo-Saxon and Elizabethan lyricism as well as from Hopkins. Klein, perhaps the most original of the group,

made his own fusion of Eliot's satiric manner with the more sensuous humour and the cabbalistic philosophy of Judaism. The chief literary vehicle for this poetry of the Thirties was the CANADIAN FORUM.

Pratt must always be mentioned separately, and it is a measure of his importance. Both in age and temperament he is a literary bridge between past and present. He is the only poet included in this edition of OUTPOSTS who was born in the nineteenth century (1883) and yet the piece which he wrote especially for this issue seems to me to be as contemporary in thought, feeling, and adventurousness of word and image, as anything in the collection. On the other hand, his *forte* is the long heroic poem; he is actually a good epic poet and as such a literary curiosity in English literature today, a Newfoundlander, a writer who does not dissect the hero to find the psychopath but accepts him, " as when Myth and reality were one".

What has been happening in the Forties is too close to be put clearly in focus. The War had less effect on the content of poetry than in England (of the 18 here assembled, only one served in the armed forces). A little belatedly, though very pleasantly, the influence of the early Auden was felt in the work of James Wreford, and of the French Symbolists in the musical, tapestried verse of Robert Finch. Klein's expression has mellowed and, following a general trend, clarified, while his themes widen to include Gentile as well as Jew, and especially the world of French-Canada that lies about him. A new social satirist. MacKay, has appeared, but he is more in the tradition of Martial than of MacNeice or of Kenneth Patchen. American influence, so marked on our prose, continues to be negligible in our poetry. The most noticeable outside stimulus in the Forties comes, as have past ones, from England; it is the influence of Dylan Thomas and other Freudian writers who have fused intellectualism with a new colourful emotionality, with emphasis upon the image rather than the idea, upon belief and symbol rather than logic and fact.

For a time such techniques were observable in two new Montreal groups: those centred about Patrick Anderson and *Preview*, and those with John Sutherland and his *First Statement*. The two journals, together with Alan Crawley's *Contemporary Verse*, edited in Vancouver since 1941, have justified their existence by introducing the most important of the younger generation of Canadian poets. Outstanding among these have been Patrick Anderson himself and P. K. Page. Both are remarkable for their ingenuity and creativeness in imagery, both for purposes of satire and psychological symbolism. In Louis Dudek one glimpses a new tendency, a reaction from the in-

tellectual and abstruse to the simple, direct poetry of ordinary life. The work of Patrick Anderson and Miriam Waddington, though more sophisticated, is primarily effective because of a romantic exploration of colour and sound in the service of emotional frankness.

Geographically speaking, there seem to be at present four foci of poetic activity in Canada: the *Fiddlehead* group at the University of New Brunswick (notably Alfred Bailey, Elizabeth Brewster and Fred Cogswell); the Montreal poets already mentioned; a new group in and around the University of Toronto, showing surrealist and existentialist tendencies (they include James Reaney), and with plans for a new literary review, *Here and Now*; and a loose grouping of writers at the University of British Columbia, including Hilda and P. K. Thomas, and Roy Daniells. Within the past two years the CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE has supplied a national meeting-place for these varied tendencies.

And now a word about the poems which follow. They do not represent an anthology, a careful selection of each poet's best, but only a sampling from current work. Fifteen of the eighteen pieces have not previously appeared in print. (The three exceptions are the poems of Klein and Anderson, taken from recent numbers of the CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE, and Louis MacKay's *Untimely Tract*, reprinted from his current *Ill-tempered Lover* with acknowledgments herewith to the Macmillan Company of Canada, Toronto, Ont.). A truly representative selection would have included the other poets who have been mentioned in this introduction, as well as Charles Bruce, Audrey A. Brown, Kay Smith, Margaret Avison, Anne Marriott, Anne Wilkinson, Raymond Souster, Elizabeth Campbell, Ronald Hambleton, R. G. Simpson and several others.

Finally, we have been concerned throughout with presenting *English*-Canadian poetry. To remind you that the native language of one-third of our nation is French and that the *Canadian* has a longer and in some ways more independent poetic tradition than the English-Canadian, we present one poem by Mlle. Jeannine Bélanger of Ottawa.

NUNS

PATRICK ANDERSON

IN practical black for God's perpetual downpour
across green lawns
in April rains
an ambulation of young and lovely nuns
who move the folds of shadow
in processions like swans and follow
the luxury of sorrow through ruins of rain.

Putting up silk umbrellas in God's blood
and moulding muscles
of spiritual veils
in which their profiles disclose discreet smiles
they move cocooned in the ineffable
their wax hands holding the chill blood of beads.

And O the long tough liquorice of prayer
twisting their mouths,
their girlish breaths,
their souls of peppermint fly to Christ's door:
like cameras they keep out of the picture,
like grates that yearn for burning on their bars
through our long sensual summer
withdraw behind cold fires of ferns and flowers.

THE BLACK GIRL AND THE POEM

LOUIS DUDEK

STANDING in the elevated, making words
in wonder over the sun going down, I moved my hand
on the enamel handle
and, touching her skin, suddenly found my eyes
upon her, tall and terrible, beautiful black girl,
before me. Our eyes with each other in a coil of thunder,
our hands removed, I stood silently
while she turned her head with stiff deliberation
to the sun outside—showing me her breast
on which my eyes rested.
She stood averted; this was permission,

the breast bursting its bud
against the dress. Trembling, I turned away;
and so she went. I with my verse
about the sun charred within me; she had aroused
the flame that now burned me, burned the poem out.
Nothing mattered but
her ebony body and eyes white as shell
I could not have,
which in the imagination stood perfected.
I walked in the street with pale and parched face,
the warm air in waves on my forehead
moving, and tears in my eyes.

UNTIMELY TRACT FOR AN UNTRACTABLE TIME

L. A. MacKay

SLOW and unfriendly flow the graceless years,
Coiling through reedy marsh and rotting bog.
With weedy memories the long channels clog,
The rusted rings flake to the mouldering piers.

From what sheer fountain did your floods begin
Who see the bright wings budding marvellously
Under the shadowy chryalis? But I see
Only the old snake shedding an old skin.

BRUME SUR L'EAU

Jeannine Bélanger

BRUME sur l'eau—mais l'eau la lèche.
Brume sur les maisons sans toits.
Brume sur le clocher sans flèche,
Privé de sveltesse et de croix.

Brume sur l'arbre dans la brise,
Sur mes deux mains, sur le gazon,
Sur toute âme d'amour éprise,
Sur chaque douce déraison.

Brume à mes cils . . . Et quand leur frange
Me voile, au jour, le ciel chrétien,
Je cherche, vers cette aube étrange,
Quelque horizon qui m'appartient.

MAN IS A SNOW

EARLE BIRNEY

NOT the cougar leaping to myth
from the orange lynx of our flame
not the timber swooning to death
in the shock of the saw's bright whine
but the rotograved lie
the pine resurrected in slum
and a nursery of crosses in Europe.

Not the death of the prairie grass
in wheat's monotonous flooding
but the harvest mildewed with doubt
and the starved in the hour of hoarding
not the rivers we foul but our blood
o cold and more devious rushing.

Man is a snow that cracks
the trees' red resinous arches
that winters his cabined heart
till the chilled nail shrinks in the wall
and pistols the brittle air
till frost like ferns of the world that is lost
unfurl on the darkening windows.

LAKE SUCCESS

E. J. PRATT

WHY hurry? Stow your jackets in the lockers!
A bloodless argument could dry its rage
Upon an igneous or glacial page.
Some day the pterodactyls may return.
What warden whispered that a lizard dwells
In the green suburbs of your syllables?

Caesar aut nihil. Deserts lie between.
Covet the lulls in your penultimates
Made up of aspirates and carbonates.
The sand drifts round the black and white, the *Yes*
And *No*. Check well before you leave your chairs
The straps between those dromedary pairs.

Delay decisions. Visit the museums,
The markets, public squares, the parks and beaches
For convalescent moments after speeches.
Observe all signals—*green, red, stop, go.*
Note last—" This way to the memorial plaques
To find the exits to your *cul-de-sacs.*"

But keep the rivals from the gardens where,
Upon the latch click as each session closes,
They could stroll in to pollinate the roses.
For be the years one hundred, seven or thirty,
A howling larynx can endure this strain
Of effluent more readily than a vein.

Rumble your bellyfuls and crack your hulls,
But let the thunder like a thousand Babels
Bark its black knuckles on the oak of tables.
This is the *summum* that the dead may wish—
That these, the broods as yet untombed, may snatch
A loaf of life before their canines hatch.

SUNRISE

MALCOLM LOWRY

SOBER I rode into the brand new dawn
With steady hand grasping the single rein,
New shod, new shrived and all but newly born
Over the smiling grandiloquent plain.

Surcingless as heaven ran my steed
And true to heaven rose my simple song.
Ah, the years behind seemed lost, and lost the deed,
As pommel and stirrups unheeded I cantered along.

—But what cactuses are those on every hand
Wild dogs and spectres, all enveloping ?
And came again into that evening land,
Galloping, galloping, galloping—

Bound to that unrelenting fatuous horse
Whose eyes are lidless and whose name remorse.

VEGETABLE ISLAND

P. K. Page

FLOWERS own it.
Everywhere their flags flutter.
The deep woods are stormed
and trees throw bouquets to each other, pass
petals along from bough to bough.
It is theirs.

There is no window they have not invaded,
pressed or crept over the sill of, flung
their scent like a symbol through an entire room.
Business men in offices, dictating,
smelling the hanging baskets from the streets
stop and wonder about their gardens, ponder
are they too lush and lovely lovely are they
a little out of hand? The hedges calling
coyly as they advance,
the bright grass
silently leaping.

Sometimes a man must seek the sea out here.
Down where small lichens stucco all the rocks
it smacks with a smell of chowder on the shore.
A cormorant with periscope neck floats black
among the gulls. Some bird in tiny ambush stamps about,
undoes the sudden buzzer in its throat,
and breaks the sweetness of the simmering goise.
Oh, undiseased by pollen, hand in water
beneath the saline wave is sharp and clear
unsmudged by pastel petal, uncorrupted.

Sometimes a man must strip and throw his body
into the acid ocean to erase
the touch and scent of flowers, their little cries
like sickly mistresses, their gentle faces
pleading consumption.
Sometimes he has no strength to meet a tree
debauched with blossoms.

But women wander unafraid as if
they made the petals
and tiny children in the meadows wave
with wildflowers in their fists
or strip the woods of flowers
and turn away
to fresh and unrelated interests
as if the flesh were only hurt by what
is made of metal—knife-blade or buckshot.

THE SPIRAL

ROBERT FINCH

WHEN sleep drifts its darkening flakes
Soon the fallow dreamfield quakes
As the seeds of waking's tomb
Burst in slumber's umber bloom.

When waking's star anoints those shoots
Day is so agog with fruits
Sleep snows again before there's heed
Where it falls and on what seed.

Waking self and sleeping self,
Neither whole and neither half,
Each transformed is each transformer,
Both at once dormant and dormer.

Man is not inagile argil
Bandied between trance and vigil,
They and he cannot dissever,
He delimits, they deliver.

All that wake are in one world
By another world enfurled,
All that sleep are in the same
Dream within a coming dream.

Wakers sleep, in worlds of sleeping
Waking veers the spheric reaping;
Sleepers wake, in worlds of waking
Sleep takes over overtaking.

QUEBEC LIQUOR COMMISSION

A. M. Klein

NONETHELESS Ali Baba had no richer cave,
nor lamps more sensitive Aladdin's thumb
than this cave, and these lamps which, at the touch,
evoke the growing slave,
and change the rag-poor world to purple-rich.
" O Visier, wrapped in all knowledge and experience,
bring me, bring me in a flower of air,
the scent of the world's motion, the pollen, the fire,
the fumes of magnificence ! "
" Your servant, my Lord, has done according to your
desire !

And brought you also the pleasures of the skin about
the round,
the sycophancy of glass, the palm's cool courtier,
and the feel of straw, all rough and rustical,
by some king's daughter donned ;
and for your royal eyes, your Ishmael
with rub and abracadabra and obeisance brings
those forms and shapes, that harem opulence
that my Lord dotes on ; and, of the same scope
their voices, like happenings
on cushions behind curtains, like whispers at the
thrilled ear's lobe."

" Well done ! my sudden and slick man, and above all,
well done
in the conjuring of those mischievous genii
who nip at the paps of palate, hop on the tongue,
in the throat make merry and fun ?
O, they go tumbling in the paunch's nets ! O rung
by rung, disporting, they climb into the brain's bazaar !
Wonderful are their tricks and somersaults,
such ingenuities as do make a king forget
the troubles that there are
even for kings, the rag-poor past, the purple that may set."

LONDON RAIN

DOROTHY LIVESAY

HERE holding the mind is the lean rain
Bombarding umbrellas, falling slant upon
Faces unfurled and fresh to the driven sky;
Or sheltered by buildings graceful as frozen rain
Shaped to a timely pattern by weathered words,
Fountain songs from a city's mouth.
People surrender to rain, green swayed trees
Bow mutely to the thrashing: dust dovetails
With rivulets between the roots of elms
And weariness is washed from the soul of the square
Dignified by a saint's name, but grown
Grim with the slate grey walls five landings high:
Where, discreetly, gas lips through the halls
Cathedral chilled, icy with time's rain.

THE RED ATTIC WINDOW

JAMES REANEY

LIKE the six pleats
Of a strong grey fan
Are the six stairs to the attic.
Where you may sit in the house's brain
In the grey teeth of the rain-comb.
There the cistern sadly comments
And the yellow soap dreams
Of its future wedding with dirty hands
And the wrists of sweaters.
There is an old trunk
Filled with gothic novels . . .
Oh, dungeon's, rusty stairs, stains and doors
With creaking tongues.
WalpolecastleofotrantoRadcliffeReevesbeckfordvathemonkLewis
Melmoththewanderermaturinsheridanlefanu

And a spinning-wheel
And a rocking-chair that once beheaded a kitten
And a red attic window
That colours all Yardstick Street
With fabulous massacre.

SONNET

ROY DANIELS

A wreath of oak leaves with an angry rose
I bring you and a nightingale encaged :
The rose enraged, the calm wreath for your brows
And the poor singing stranger unassuaged.

Turn now in blessing for these petals torn
Distil a sharper fragrance from my breast ;
Arrest all wrath and be the smooth leaves worn
Adorning triumph for they are the best

My branching mind can show : thick, thick and green
The wreath I weave you from that topmost bough ;
And still in pity hear the bird unseen
Too mean to be beheld that sings for you.

To you the triumph and the enchanted song
Of suffering tongue and the red rose belong.

FOUNDLING

MIRIAM WADDINGTON

BRILLIANT hoops, purple maze, surprise
Of bridges toppling in the snow,
Strange strange morning when red riding hood
Awoke in the arms of the wolf,
Uncover her dreams and summer are her wishes,
A golden flower her face, oh morning
Built on snowpeaks, oh morning
Would not wait but like a clown
Went dancing in her eyes and sun beneficent
Hatched houses out of ice.
The sparkling river, sugary, spins out
Its bell, bridge bends to banks and dips
Its steeples, and her red scarf screams
In pain, her mother's hand held her
She was held inside a world, inside,
And bells rang outside in the snow,
Then the three bears roared,
The rutted road was closed.

Come close, lost goldilocks, come close
And drown your loss let waves of winter swirl,
And know you've turned
The first leaf towards your death,
Later grief will teach
The alphabet of pain and when you've grown
You'll read the story of your loss
In this white morning, Sunday's frosty bells,
Bridge toppling and your mother's hand
Not there, your woe, your woe.

ROADSIDE NEAR MOSCOW

R. A. D. Ford

BENT and heavy with rain,
Staggering in silence, profoundly
Occupied with the secret reconstruction
Of their balance, pine and tamarack
Trees, gathered in profane

Assembly to watch over the slow
Passing of the almost human-like
Column of prisoners, waiting for the snow
To fill in their tracks—strange
Judges of evil done

In many ways. Because I am not
Walking in chains, and am afraid
To look, lest by implication
Glance should be said guilty,
Unhappily turn my head

To the stale spectacle of the sun
Setting among the conifers.
And when it is gone, look down
For the column of men in vain—
In the thick arch of night

That has come suddenly,—
Hobble my eyes to perceive
Nothing but the rain, turning
To snow,—all that I wish to see.

SONNET

PATRICK D. WADDINGTON

THIS then is how it was. Night spawned, the snow
With eyelash softness brushed our window pane
quick, curious shy like forest eyes that glow
in fire a moment then flick out again
and all about is dark that rustles ; oh
world was a shell of light night ringed in vain
a diving bell sunk in the deep sea flow
whose blazing ports turned silt to golden rain.

And our new selves stepped out on land as new
where waves hung frozen at their breaking crest
in this drowned city where none lived to know
how love's sure gain its certain loss confessed,
for death lies latent in the perfect view
quiet and cold as snow falling on snow.

FOR MINNA

JAMES WREFORD

FOR Minna let the world again
Resume a classic grace as when
Myth and reality were one.

And gods were happy, looking down
On courage that for Helen won
A deathless Iliad from a ruin.

Though none could tell the cause was right
They fought it bravely and were straight :
An epic sprang up at their feet.

But we with crooked deeds frustrate
The daemon of our obvious right ;
And drop a bomb to save us thought.

O little Minna, would I could
See for your sake the ancient road
Carry its virtue in your blood

That you might come to the fatal wood
Not fearful, nor with tears, but proud,
Vainly withstanding, to have stood.

PROLEGOMENON AT MIDNIGHT

RALPH GUSTAFSON

IT is the rusted moon moves foamless parting sky,
Her salty plimsoll stowed still with beauty.
She weighed westerly soon.

A figure merely. But it was once, I mused,
Granted to swashbuckle tide and seed and star
On schedule, scoff departures.

Youth is not sharp enough. He mooned on moons
Not knowing images are accurate as coins
And dreams deliberate.

Blustered his blossomy April of gangplank failures
Whose weather's welter was a mathematics,
Winter's punctual plot.

Thwarted by swagger and love's lavish, what
Do we remember of the thousandth rose
Or copulation's squander?

What only solver but that daredown doter
Launched like a lackluck whose heroics, none
Of our laurel, target love.

O nothing now but I must out of oceans
Lift leviathan like a Job, my Moby
Dangle on a hook.

That is to say, nothing's left to do
But drag up god in the wig of my words. The rest's
a muddle of farewells.

CONTRIBUTORS

PATRICK ANDERSON. Born England, 1915 ; educated at Oxford. Since 1940, Montreal private schoolteacher. Founding editor of *Preview* ; former associate editor of *Northern Review*. Chicago *Poetry* Fellowship Prize, 1943. Author of *A tent for April* and *The White Centre*.

JEANNINE BÉLANGER, 1915. Ottawa civil servant. Gold Medalist in French literature, Paris Academy. Three books of verse.

EARLE BIRNEY, 1904. Professor of English, University of British Columbia. Editor of *Canadian Poetry Magazine* ; formerly literary editor of *Canadian Forum*. Author of *David*, *Now is the time*, and the current *Strait of Anian*. Twice winner of Governor-General's medal for poetry.

ROY DANIELS. Professor of English, University of B.C.

LOUIS DUDEK, 1918. Graduate student in English, Columbia University, New York City. Author of *East of the City*.

ROBERT FINCH, 1900. Professor of French, University of Toronto. Painter and Musician. His *Poems* won the Governor-General's medal.

RALPH GUSTAFSON, 1909. Editor of several anthologies, notably *Penguin Anthology of Canadian Poetry*, New Directions *Little Anthology of Canadian Poets*, and Pelican *Canadian Accent*. Five books of verse.

R. A. D. FORD. Canadian Embassy staff, Moscow. Formerly with Canadian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro. Translator of Brazilian and Russian poetry.

ABRAHAM KLEIN, 1909. Educated at McGill. Montreal barrister. Chicago *Poetry's* Bland Prize, 1947. Several books of verse.

DOROTHY LIVESAY, 1909. Vancouver free-lance journalist. Four books of verse beginning 1928 and including *Poems for People*, 1947. Governor-General's Medal, 1944. Royal Society of Canada Medal for Literature.

MALCOLM LOWRY. Born Merseyside, 1909. Educated at Cambridge. Now a Canadian citizen. Two novels including *Under the Volcano*.

LOUIS A. MACKAY, 1901. Educated at Toronto and Oxford. Professor of classics, University of B.C. Critic and playwright. Two books of verse.

PATRICIA K. PAGE, 1916. Script-writer. Chicago *Poetry's* Blumenthal Prize, 1944. Formerly editor of *Preview* and *Northern Review*. Author of *As Ten, as Twenty*.

E. J. Pratt, C.M.G. Born Newfoundland, 1883. Professor of English, University of Toronto. Twice winner of Governor-General's Medal. Most celebrated of living Canadian poets. Fourteen books of verse.

James Reaney. University of Toronto undergraduate.
Miriam Waddington, 1917. Montreal social worker. Author of *Green World.*

Patrick Waddington, 1913. Educated at Toronto and University College, London. News Editor, Radio Canada, Montreal. Associate editor of *Canadian Poetry Magazine.*

REVIEWS

The Kid: Conrad Aiken (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, New York. $2.00).

A Tale Told: Ed. by W. G. Bebbington (Allen & Unwin, 3s. 0d.).

Breathless Kingdom: Wrenne Jarman (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.).

The White Radiance: J. K. C. Hoffman (Fortune Press, 6s. 0d.).

Slow Music: Genevieve Taggard (Harper & Bros. $2.00).

Translation: Ed. by Neville Braybrooke and Elizabeth King (Phoenix Press 10s. 6d.)

WHEN, I wonder, will we shake off that deadly critical malady, hook-line-and-sinker disease? For generations now, the anthologists have doped us with the fourth rate work of major poets to the neglect of first rate work by their minor contemporaries. Give a dog a good name and everything he writes is a masterpiece, it seems. That, at least, is the impression one may get from some reviews of Mr. Aiken's latest book. *The Kid* is, in fact, Mr. Aiken at his technical and imaginative worst, and after ten or so pages of line to line jingle rhyming one longs for the grace and majesty of his *Preludes for Memnon* or *Time in the Rock.* In those earlier poems he showed a subtlety of craftsmanship and urgency of imagination which marked him as great—perhaps the greatest—among American living poets. "The Kid," the Author's Note tells us, "is in many respects the prototypical American." And from the first *Kid* (a courageous dreamer from Cambridge who was implanted in Boston before the first settlers arrived in the 1620s) the poet develops his prototype through such diverse characters as Kit Carson and Walt Whitman, giving us sad little glimpses of that New America which has confounded human achievement. As a wing-clipper of poetic genius the long narrative poem ranks first. I

am sorry that Mr. Aiken should have allowed his talent to feel its narcotic influence.

To say that is not to deny that narrative poems *do* have their place—if, poetically, a minor one—in our literature. In Mr. Bebbington's view they provide the ideal medium for telling tales, and to prove it he has collected a number of them in anthology form. There are familiar pieces by Coleridge, Cowper, Southey, Scott, Tennyson and Poe; less familiar ones by such contemporaries as Eliot, Auden and Day Lewis. It is significant that only one of the really 'younger' poets—Henry Treece—is included. Are our younger contemporaries finding the imaginative short story a more suitable art form for that kind of thing? One reflects that outstanding poets like Dylan Thomas have employed the latter medium for their storytelling.

Of three personal collections, Miss Wrenne Jarman's *Breathless Kingdom* appealed to me most. Here is a poet whose work shows at once simplicity in approach and a lively poetic perception. Such pieces as *Poetry is in the Living* (which readers of *Outposts* may remember) and *The Sanctuary* (for Clifford Bax) have a delicacy of movement and sensitivity of taste that one cannot fail to appreciate. Unfortunately, Miss Jarman's work loses these qualities when she beats the drum (as in *To Us the Victory*) or lapses into personal or religious sentimentality. She should be reminded that the great Christian writers have never found naïvety a necessity when treating religious subjects. *Breathless Kingdom* is an interesting first volume, though its standard could have been greatly improved by the inclusion of, say, thirty poems instead of eighty.

If Mr. Hoffman's book has similar weaknesses to Miss Jarman's, it certainly has not similar strengths. Almost every poem is bedevilled by that poetaster's jargon which is sure passport to an Editor's rejection file. Occasionally he touches a slightly lyrical note:

> As lief in Winter doubt the Spring
> Or doubt by night the Sun,
> As doubt this hour, my love, because
> In heart dark sorrows run."

but all too much of *The White Radiance* appears to emanate from an artificial light.

Unlike the two volumes just mentioned, *Slow Music* is in no way the work of a beginner. Indeed Miss Taggard has something of a reputation in the United States and has already produced eight kindly-received

collections of her own work. But for all that, I can find in *Slow Music* few poems to which could be ascribed more than the attributes of sound technique or superficial attractiveness. Miss Taggard's form seems to bear no particular relation to her subject and is varied little enough to become almost monotonous. She favours word patterns which produce a dissonant or staccato effect. And one is constantly aware of her endeavour to impress :

> " This poem,—(which contains
> A world which contains a poem,
> This poem wnich contains a poem and a versal world,
> Bubble in Bubble—this poem . . . "

The translation of poetry is, I suppose, one of those things which will always be a source of dispute. *Can* poetry be translated ? How far should the original syntax be maintained: how far *can* it be maintained ? Should the translator convey the spirit of the poem at the expense of narrative, imagery, or literal sense ? Whatever we may answer to these and similar questions, one fact is clear. The *organic* rhythm of a poem —its very core, if not its soul—can be communicated by no other means than the actual sounds created by words pronounced as the poet wrote them. But if we recognise the translator's limitations we should not undervalue his services. They provide a worth-while guide to the poetry of other tongues and often they contribute to the literature of our own.

Moving with discrimination through work from more than a dozen languages, the editors of *Translation* have made a pleasing and scholarly collection. In their choice of translators, as in their selection of material, they have considered poetic qualities rather than academic ones. Roy Campbell, Vernon Watkins, John Heath-Stubbs, James Kirkup and other well known poets are contributors. The French is perhaps the most satisfactory section and W. J. Strachan and Eva Martin—translating *From 'Seize'* (Jules Supervielle) and *To Albert Dürer* (Victor Hugo) respectively—combine accuracy with a delightful lightness of touch. From the Spanish there is a fine translation of Lorca's *Somnambulistic Ballad* by Roy and Mary Campbell ; from the Italian a (surprisingly) displeasing one by John Heath-Stubbs ; from the Russian several short pieces, the best of which is *Through Luminous Morning Mists* (Vladimir Solovyev) by W. K. Matthews. Ancient as well as modern languages are represented, though (wisely) in small measure.

Translation will surely take its place on many shelves as the most valuable current publication of its kind. In congratulating both editors and publisher, may I suggest that the Third Series be produced in some slightly less forbidding format?

LIONEL MONTEITH

A Private History: John Hay (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, New York, 2.00).
Look to the Sun: Western McDaniel (Beechhurst Press, New York).
Sea Acres: Arthur Ball (Peter Ratazzi, 2s. 6d.).
The North Sea: Heinrich Heine (Wingate, 10s. 6d.).
Never Despair of Gardens: Gloria Komai (Sylvan Press, 3s. 6d.).
Lament for Strings: Wrey Gardiner (Grey Walls Press, 6s. od.).
The Daystar: Dorothy Una Ratcliffe (Temple Sowerby Press, 8s. 6d.)

A Private History is the first book of Mr. John Hay, a young American poet, and for a first book it is surprisingly even in quality. The title poem, with its unassimilated material, is probably the weakest, but it is the authentic result of the poet's wartime experience and, having worked it out of his mind, he has released himself for the creation of some accomplished lyrics such as *The Gull*, *For Susan*, *The Jester* and *A Poem for You*. Mr. Hay has a wide range and an individual voice.

Another interesting book from America is *Look to the Sun*. The author, Mr. Weston McDaniel, has written a number of lyrics in free verse around a central theme—human intolerance—and if they are not entirely successful as a sequence, they certainly stand in their own right as separate poems. Whilst Mr. McDaniel is too much the artist to dissipate his energy on crude denunciations of the evils with which he is concerned, his writing possesses such emotional power as to arouse an immediate response in the reader's mind.

Mr. Arthur Ball confines himself to minor themes. His *Sea Acres*, a selection from two earlier volumes together with new work, is largely made up of landscape and seascape poems, pleasant in their way, but seldom setting fire to the imagination. He has a surer touch and a more original outlook when writing of people like *The Caithness Boatman* and *An Old Woman by Firelight*. At least two of the poems are spoiled by excessive sentimentality.

The opinion has frequently been expressed that poets make the best translators of poetry, and the latest version of *The North Sea and Other Poems* by Heinrich Heine would seem to confirm this view. Mr.

Stirling, the translator, has been strictly accurate in his interpretation but he is far from being a poet himself, and the inclusion of both English and German on opposite pages merely emphasises the fact.

Women poets have been rare in the past. Recently there have been clear signs that they will exercise an important influence upon poetry in the forthcoming years. Edith Sitwell is already regarded as one of our leading poers, and the work of Kathleen Raine, Dallas Kenmare, Morwenna Donnelly and Anne Ridler have attracted considerable attention. Among the lesser known writers, Miss Gloria Komai is a poet to watch. Her first book, *Never Despair of Gardens*, contains some remarkably effective imagery and reveals her intuitive approach to life, particularly in *The Night is Greek*, *Time Will be Ended*, and *Invocation*. A few of the poems are marred by the over-use of terse phrases :

> " Paths are imperious. You cannot turn,
> But take immediacy. Rose-garden
> Delivers summer ; "

and *Ultimatum* is the only poem on a major subject—yet it is sufficient to indicate that she is a poet with a future.

Lament for Strings is Mr. Wrey Gardiner's third book of poems and it is pleasing to observe the increasing sense of discipline and control, and the clearer formulation of ideas in this poet's work. Mr. Gardiner is not a sensationalist ; he achieves his effects by the subtlety of his style and the quietness of his tone, and the result is deeply moving. Throughout this book there is an almost unbearable atmosphere of sorrow and suffering :

> " In the undying agony of the unspeakable dawn,
> Haunted by crosses and driven by our means,
> We carry the image of the children unborn,
> The future of fire and the waters of peace."

balanced, to some extent, by the realisation of true values without which a poet so sensitive would be unable to contemplate the problems of our age and retain his sanity.

> " I live beyond tomorrow
> In the wisdom of living words."

Although *The Daystar* by Miss Dorothy Una Ratcliffe is a one-act Nativity Play in prose and only the carols are in verse, it deserves a place in my present list on account of its poetic conception. The story is familiar but Miss Ratcliffe has a rare delicacy that makes her play extremely suitable for production in schools and institutions.

MORTIMER STEELE